
Single-Family New Construction Green Building Requirements FAQ Sheet

Q: Why is Minnesota Housing requiring green building requirements under the Community Revitalization Fund program?

Minnesota Housing adopted a formal sustainability policy in 2007 and has a longstanding commitment to advancing sustainable building and land use in the affordable housing sector. Incorporation of green building requirements into the CRV program furthers this commitment to promoting cost-effective energy conservation measures, healthy environments, and efficient land use.

Q: What do the green building requirements entail and where can I find more information?

Compliance with the National Green Communities mandatory criteria developed by Enterprise and Minnesota Green Communities, as modified by the Minnesota Overlay to the national Green Communities Criteria, is required for new construction activities. Option elements in the national Green Communities criteria are encouraged but not required.

Step 1: Review the National Green Communities Criteria, found here:

www.mnhousing.gov/idc/groups/public/documents/document/mhfa_004046.pdf

Step 2: Review the Minnesota Overlay to the Green Communities Criteria for Single-Family Housing, found here: <http://www.mnhousing.gov/resources/apply/rfp/index.aspx>

Q: When is the policy effective?

The single-family new construction green development policy is effective with all new construction units requesting funds under the fall 2008 CRV funding round.

Q: Who is required to comply with the policy?

All CRV administrators working in partnership with a builder and seeking funds from Minnesota Housing for new construction activities (interim financing, value gap or affordability gap) are required to comply with the green building requirements. CRV administrators proposing to use CRV affordability gap assistance that is not tied to a specific developer or development are exempt.

Q: Why are the requirements applicable to new construction only? What about rehabilitation proposals?

The green building requirements are first being implemented under the CRV program for new construction. Rehabilitation proposals are encouraged to incorporate feasible green building principles as well, and the national Green Communities criteria do include green building strategies for infill and rehab.

Q: Are waivers available? What is the process for obtaining a waiver?

The Single-Family Division will allow a waiver request only in cases where the CRV administrator/ developer demonstrates that the criteria creates a tangible hardship or is inadvisable for a specific development. Complete documentation pertaining to the need for the waiver request is required at the time an application is submitted. The request for a waiver should be submitted as part of the green development plan. If a waiver is needed, applicants are encouraged to offset the waived requirement by pursuing one or more of the optional Green Communities criteria.

Q: Do the green building requirements add cost?

Minnesota Housing's green building requirements have been carefully selected from national Green Communities Criteria developed by Enterprise specific to the affordable housing sector. In evaluating the additional cost of green building requirements, it is important to review both the upfront green premium costs and the long-term benefits to the homeowner with respect to energy savings and healthier housing. Green premium costs are difficult to precisely determine, as developers and builders currently operate from different green benchmarks with respect to systems, appliances and products used. Recent studies in the area of green building note a green premium of around 2%¹ as well as a decrease in overall green building costs over time as green technologies become more prominent in the building industry.

Q: Where can I find more information on preparing a green development plan?

Minnesota Housing requires administrators to submit a green development plan as part of the RFP application. The Intended Method of Satisfying Green Communities Criteria, Release and Certification template can be found here:

<http://www.mnhousing.gov/resources/apply/rfp/index.aspx> In addition to this resource, the Minnesota Overlay to the Green Communities Criteria for Single-Family Housing lists other green development planning tools and resources.

Q: Aren't many of the green standards already incorporated in Minnesota's building code?

Some of the green standards are embedded into Minnesota Building and Energy Code, however many are not.

Q: Where can I find information on the Energy Star Builder's Option Package requirements?

The Builder's Option Package requirements identify two climate zones within the state of Minnesota. To learn more about which climate zone applies to the specific county of interest see here for more information:

www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=bop.pt_bop_minnesota

¹ Kats, Gregory. Green Building Costs and Financial Benefits. Online at: www.cap-e.com/ewebeditpro/items/O59F3481.pdf. William Bradshaw et al. The Costs and Benefits of Green Affordable Housing. New Ecology and the Green CDCs Initiative.

Q: Do the green standards require that I become an Energy Star Builder? If not, where can I learn more about becoming a certified Energy Star Builder?

Requirement 5.1a sets an energy efficiency standard that allows builders/developers an option to comply by either building to the Energy Star Builders Option Package for the appropriate climate zone in Minnesota or to build to a HERS index score of 80 (or lower). A builder does not need to be a certified Energy Star Builder to comply with this standard by building to the Energy Star Builders Option Package, but builders that select this option are encouraged to review the Energy Star certification process to learn about the benefits, including marketing and promotional materials.

Go to www.energystar.gov for additional details and click on “new homes”

Q: How will I know if my units are selected by Minnesota Housing for third party energy efficiency verification (5.1a)? What is the process if selected?

Minnesota Housing will determine selection for third-party verification after award decisions are finalized by Minnesota Housing’s Board of Directors.

Q: I understand that the Builder’s Association of Minnesota administers an Energy Payback Incentive program where eligible for-profit builders that meet federal energy efficiency standards are eligible for a \$2,000 tax credit. May I also work with that program and where can I learn more about it?

Minnesota Housing encourages you to contact the Builder’s Association of Minnesota directly to determine eligibility for the Energy Payback Incentive program. For more details go to: www.bamn.org.

Q Where can I find additional information on green products and resources?

The University of Minnesota’s Center for Sustainable Building Research has a variety of green design and product-related information on its website: www.csbr.umn.edu.

Q: Where can I obtain the “Building Maintenance and Occupant’s Manual” template to update for a specific project?

The template is under development but will be made available via the Minnesota Housing website upon completion.